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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 6768

BILL NUMBER: SB 235

NOTE PREPARED: Feb 25, 2008

BILL AMENDED: Feb 25, 2008

SUBJECT: Vote Centers; Absentee Voting.

FIRST AUTHOR: Sen. Landske

FIRST SPONSOR: Rep. Pierce

BILL STATUS: 2nd Reading - 2nd House

**FUNDS AFFECTED: X GENERAL
DEDICATED
FEDERAL**

IMPACT: State & Local

Summary of Legislation: (Amended) This bill has the following provisions:

Vote Centers- The bill establishes the use of vote centers as an option for all counties. The bill requires the county election board (CEB) to approve an order designating the county a vote center county, adopt a plan to administer the vote centers, and file the order and the plan with the Election Division. The bill requires the board to accept and consider public comment before adopting an order designating the county as a vote center county. The bill provides that designation of a county as a vote center county remains in effect until the board rescinds the order designating the county as a vote center county and files a copy of the rescission with the Election Division.

The bill redesignates automatically as a vote center county a county designated before July 1, 2008, as a vote center pilot county. The bill allows the Secretary of State (SOS) to designate not later than March 15, 2008, one additional county as a vote center pilot county. The bill repeals the expiration date of the vote center program and provisions that: (1) require the SOS's approval of the vote center designation; and (2) allow the SOS to revoke the vote center designation.

Electronic Poll Lists- The bill requires electronic poll lists may not have information about voters other than the information that is contained on the certified list of voters.

Voting Absentee Ballot- The bill permits a voter who is qualified to vote in person to vote by absentee ballot. The bill removes all other qualifications for a voter to vote by absentee ballot except for a voter with disabilities who is unable to make a voting mark on the ballot or sign the absentee ballot secrecy envelope. (Such a disabled voter is currently required to vote before an absentee voter board.)

Effective Date: January 1, 2008 (retroactive); Upon passage; July 1, 2008.

Explanation of State Expenditures: *Vote Centers-* The SOS and the Election Division would have additional administrative duties to designate either pilot or permanent vote centers. Both the SOS and Election Division would be able to carry out the provisions of the bill within their existing level of resources.

Background- The Indiana Election Division reverted \$21,218 to the General Fund at the end of FY 2007. The Division had two vacancies worth \$88,000 in salary as of November 2007.

At the end of FY 2007, the SOS reverted \$42,178 to the state General Fund.

Explanation of State Revenues:

Explanation of Local Expenditures: *Vote Centers-* The establishment of vote centers could reduce the expenditures needed to conduct an election, including payment of fewer poll workers and printing of poll books. However, start-up expenses such as the establishment of an electronic poll book database could offset some of the potential savings. The impact on local expenditures would depend on the adoption of ordinances by CEBs (under unanimous approval) and resolutions of approval by both the county executive and county fiscal body.

(Revised) *Electronic Poll Lists-* The bill would require electronic poll lists (1) to be programmed so that two precinct officers of different parties may record that a voter voted; (2) not to be connected to a voting system; and (3) not provide information other than provided on certified voter lists. This provision could require development costs to meet the above requirements. Any increase in expenditures would depend on any necessary development of electronic poll lists to comply with this provision.

Voting Absentee Ballot- County election boards, particularly counties with direct recording electronic voting systems, would require additional paper ballots for voters choosing to vote absentee. Therefore, this provision would increase election board ballot expenditures. Additional local expenditures would depend on the number of additional ballots ordered by counties in future elections.

Background Vote Centers- Reduction of local expenditures would depend largely on the provision in the bill requiring one vote center per 10,000 active voters. Therefore, the number of vote centers actually established, under the bill, would depend on the number of active voters of counties. The following table depicts the number of precincts vs. the potential number of vote centers statewide (if all counties established vote centers).

Active Voters (as of 11/12/2007)	Minimum Vote Centers under bill (1 per 10,000 voters)	Inactive Voters (as of 11/12/2007)	Number of Active Precincts (as of 4/16/2007)	2004 General Election Registered Voters	2004 General Election Actual Voters Voting
4,492,351	449	496,404	5,648	4,296,602	2,512,142

The number of precincts above overstates the impact, as some precincts are housed together in the same polling place and rely on the same voting equipment. The numbers do state that there would be an overall reduction in the number of polling places compared to if every county maintained precincts at a ratio of approximately 800 active voters per precinct. Each precinct is required to maintain a separate precinct election board. Assuming a ratio of one center per 10,000 voters was generally followed, hundreds of precinct election boards would be eliminated by vote centers. However, actual savings would vary by county, as many counties are currently unable to find enough people to fully staff all of their precinct election boards during an election.

Tippecanoe County- Tippecanoe County was one of two pilot counties designated by the Secretary of State after the passage of P.L. 164-2006 authorizing pilot vote centers. During the 2007 municipal election, Tippecanoe County established 22 vote centers replacing 52 precinct polling locations. Based on testimony in the Census Data Advisory Committee during the 2007 interim, Tippecanoe County was required by law to establish at least six vote centers. Tippecanoe County paid their vote center inspectors \$170 per day during the 2007 election, partially to include increased training time (four hours). Tippecanoe County had budgeted to pay their inspectors \$160 in a conventional precinct election (due to fewer hours of training).

In their forthcoming report to the Secretary of State, Tippecanoe County estimates that a precinct election would have required 260 full-time poll workers versus approximately 142 full-time (plus some additional part-time) poll workers utilized in vote centers during the 2007 municipal election. Additionally, Tippecanoe County paid \$10,750 for electronic polling software for the vote centers. As a result, the county did not have to produce paper versions, which were estimated to cost \$1,782 to produce. Poll book printing savings would break even with the start-up cost of the poll book software within roughly six elections conducted by vote centers.

The requirement to produce and mail voter postcards, which a voter was supposed to show a poll worker before voting at a vote center (to prevent duplicate voting), cost the county \$12,465 to produce, a cost not required in a conventional precinct election. However, the additional expenditures generated by postcard production for the vote centers were mostly offset by the reduced part-time labor and absentee ballot production costs experienced in the election using vote centers.

Ballot Cost- The cost of optical scan ballots depends on the contract in place between a county and their ballot vendor. As an example, Marion County, which is the largest county using optical scan with approximately 600,000 ballots produced, had a ballot cost of \$0.32 per ballot for the 2006 general election.

Explanation of Local Revenues:

State Agencies Affected: Secretary of State, Election Division.

Local Agencies Affected: County election boards.

Information Sources: *FY 2007 Close-Out General Fund Reversion Summary*; *State of Indiana Detail Staffing Report 7/2/2007*; Linda Phillips, Tippecanoe County Clerk, 765-423-9326; LSA survey for precinct election officer per diem.

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